

## PSA PLACEMENT

- Ascertain how much the media outlet runs PSAs (almost all outlets carry some public service announcements).
- Determine who should receive the PSAs and in what form they want the materials. Most radio and television stations will ask you to send them to their public affairs or public service director, and you may be connected to a recorded message that gives you specific directions for sending your materials. At newspapers and magazines, you probably will be directed to the Advertising Department, because print PSAs usually are treated the same as paid print ads. In fact, print PSAs are often used in place of paid ads that were canceled at the last minute.
- Prepare a list of public affairs directors/others who are responsible for their outlet's public information and education programs.
- Ask to meet with the public affairs director or other responsible person to discuss your program. A face-to-face meeting offers you the best opportunity to present your case for running the PSAs.
- Encourage coalition members to contact the media outlet expressing their interest in the PSAs being run. Sponsorship by a diverse group of well-respected organizations and individuals in the community can have a great effect on a public service director's decision to run a PSA.
- Call the media outlet a few days after sending the materials to see if they have arrived. Ask if they have been reviewed and if the outlet plans to run them. If they have decided to run your PSAs, find out when. If they have not yet reviewed them, find out when you should follow up to determine their interest. This also is a good time to pitch the PSAs again, briefly pointing out their importance to the community and their timeliness.
- If the outlet runs the PSAs, consider inviting the public affairs director to your promotional events.
- Send information, reprints of articles, studies, and other relevant information to your list of public service directors — even if they are not running your PSAs. It keeps them informed about the initiative and helps keep the subject in mind.

Detailed information about securing paid and discounted placement of the *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air* PSAs can be found in the “Marketing Materials” section of this toolkit.

## Tips on Writing a PSA “Pitch Letter”

Each day, the nation’s radio and television stations, newspapers, and magazines are deluged with requests for free time or space for public service announcements (PSAs). Organizations, large and small, write, call and visit media outlets to encourage the media to give their program or announcement special attention. Most of these PSAs are not selected and the reasons are many and varied. Among the most important reasons are poor message design and irrelevant subject matter. According to surveys of broadcasters, they use three primary criteria in selecting PSAs: sponsorship, relevance of the message to the community, and message design. Quality concerns range from muddy messages to poor execution. Subject problems include topics that are of little interest to the general public or are too complex to lend themselves to brief delivery.

In addition, some well-produced, relevant ads receive less attention than they deserve because of poor presentation to the media outlet. For your *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air* initiative to succeed, your effort is necessary. The subject matter certainly is important to the people in your community — cleaner air and less traffic congestion benefits just about everyone. Yours is a local program — something highly desirable to the media — with national support. The PSAs are well-executed. They are based on careful, thorough research and have excellent production value.

A key step in bringing the program to the public in your community entails writing a letter to radio and television stations and to local newspapers and magazines promoting its placement — a “pitch letter.” A pitch letter is nothing more than a strong letter that tells your story and sells it to the media. A sample PSA pitch letter is provided in this section. Whether you adapt this sample or write your own, be sure to cover the following points:

- Keep it brief, no more than one page.
- Get to the point quickly but engagingly.
- Show how and why the issue is important to the people in your community.
- Explain who is supporting the program.
- Indicate that it is timely, e.g., the program is timed to coincide with “Clean Air Month,” the beginning of the summer ozone season.
- Indicate that the creative strategy and execution were guided by careful market research conducted in 17 pilot and demonstration communities.
- Underscore that the actions suggested in the broadcast and print PSAs are easy to take, and will lead to improved air quality and reduced traffic congestion.
- Ask that the ads be aired/printed.
- Mention that you will be contacting them to follow up on your request.

## Sample Print/Broadcast PSA Pitch Letter

Date

Ms. Jane Friendly  
Public Affairs Director  
Anytown Newspaper, WANY TV/WANY-AM Radio  
Anytown, USA 12345

Dear Ms. Friendly:

What does dropping off the kids, running by the bank, and picking up the dinner have to do with cleaner air? Trip chaining — combining errands into one, sensible trip — is just one of the many actions you can take that help improve the quality of our air. Not many people understand how their travel behavior affects traffic congestion and air quality, which is why the *(name of coalition and/or coordinating organization)* needs your help to launch *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air*, a public education and partnership-building program in the *(community name)* area. The program kick-off coincides with Clean Air Month (May) and the beginning of the summer ozone season.

*(Insert sentence with local specifics that discusses why the program is important to the area, e.g., non-attainment, etc.)* Because of our commitment to informing the public about issues that affect the community, *(community name)* has joined a national education program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which focuses on a variety of individual actions that can make a difference in traffic congestion and air quality. These steps are easy to take and fit into busy schedules without major inconveniences.

We are concerned about our environment and the quality of life in our community and believe it is critically important to let the public know that they can make a difference, and that changes do not need to be drastic to have an effect. In fact, many people are already taking actions that help to reduce pollution and traffic congestion. The enclosed *(print/television/radio)* PSAs celebrate this participation as well as build awareness of the connection between travel behavior and air quality. Extensive research has guided the tone and manner of the PSAs, in that many people feel they can accept suggestions about making minor changes. *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air*, the tagline of the PSAs, reflects the fact that we all can be part of the solution.

We urge you to air these PSAs so that the citizens of our community learn about the issues and how they can make a difference. I would appreciate a chance to discuss this initiative with you, and will call you next week to set up a time that is convenient for you.

Sincerely,

*(Name of coordinator or influential local spokesperson)*